

Freel Press

THE
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TO OUR PATRONS.

Until some other arrangement is announced, the *COMMON SCHOOL JOURNAL* will be published by the subscriber.

The necessity of such a work to enlighten the community on the subject of that great public interest, our Common Schools, is universally acknowledged. The services which the Journal has heretofore rendered to the cause of education, and which, under the same auspices, it promises to render in future, commend it to the patronage of all those friends of mankind who would improve the condition of society, by preventing evils in the young, rather than by striving to cure them in the old, with great expense, and labor, and suffering.

For the information of school committees, the work will contain all the laws which may be enacted by the Legislature relating to public instruction; and all the acts and proceedings of the Board of Education, which school committees should be acquainted with, to enable them to discharge, in a faithful manner, all their official duties, and to save their respective towns from forfeitures. It will continue to impart advice and counsel to parents, on that most important of all earthly subjects,—the training up of their children, physically, intellectually, and morally, in the way in which they should go. It will supply all practicable aids and suggestions to teachers in regard to improved modes and processes of instruction, and to those principles on which the education of a being, whose nature is at once mortal and immortal, should be conducted.

The acknowledged merit of the contributions with which the Journal has been enriched by its correspondents, to say nothing of the articles prepared by its Editor, commends it to the attention of literary men. Indeed, the time has come, when no person can be considered as having a just claim to the title of a "literary man," who is unacquainted with the state of education in his own country.

All friends of education are respectfully solicited to increase the usefulness of this work, by extending its circulation.

To prevent misunderstanding, however, all subscribers who mean to withdraw their names and patronage from the Journal, will please to return this number, forthwith, and uninjured by writing or other defacement, to the publisher, to whom all business communications are to be directed.

WILLIAM BARRY.

Boston, January 1, 1842.

P. S. Postmasters are authorized to transmit all letters containing subscription money, postage free.

THE commencement of the first, or of any succeeding volume, of a periodical, must always be a step of no inconsiderable importance to its Editor. He thereby enters, not only into a legal, but into a kind of honorary relationship with his readers, pledging a certain amount of his time, labor, and talent, for the ensuing twelvemonth, to gratify their tastes, or to provide for their amusement or edification. He offers, as it were, to become a host, and, in inviting his readers to become his guests, he virtually promises to spread before them a succession of repasts, both tasteful and salutary, whatever amount of labor or of expense the preparation may cost him. And this undertaking he cannot honorably break or rescind, except from the occurrence of circumstances, both of weighty import, and unforeseen at the time of the engagement.

Before taking the pen to write an Introductory to a proposed Fourth Volume of the Common School Journal, we have revolved these considerations in our mind, in the spirit of one who, before going to war, sitteth down and counteth the cost. In the midst of other engagements and duties, we find that the obstacles in the way of this undertaking are not fanciful, nor fabricated of "such stuff as dreams are made of."

In the first place, the arduousness of the labor, as the editor of every periodical well knows, is not to be accounted for nought. He has no calendar in which he can slide the days backwards or forwards to suit his convenience. The unpytting, inexorable recurrence of the stated periods, at which the successive numbers must be issued, whether there be time, or health, or brain for the work, imposes a yoke on personal liberty, and exacts a task from the mind, not lightly to be submitted to. With the certainty of time, the messenger must be on its way; and though the welcome, on its arrival, be ever so light, yet its absence at the appointed season will be condemned as severely, as though a fortune were staked on the punctuality of its coming. Editors, indeed, would be happy men, could they rightfully suppose that the joy of their subscribers, on the reception of their work, were to be measured by the loudness of their complaints for a missing number.

Again; the prospect of a recompense, in some form of profit or praise, is a stimulus to other enterprises; but how few are the men who have added aught to their fortune or their fame, by the most devoted services to the neglected, the almost outcast cause of Education! Let no literary Swiss, or false philanthropist, enlist under this banner. He will find himself fighting on the losing side. Honors are reserved for combatants in other fields. Complimentary tokens are voted by dignified legislators, statues and monuments are erected, a nation pours out its heart in fervid song and eloquence, in praise of the chieftains who have slaughtered their fellow-men in battle; but the tops of the mountains are scarcely yet gilded with the morning light of that day, when mankind shall transfer their homage from the destroyers of their race to those champions, who go not forth with the sound of the clarion or trump, but, with lowly and obscure labor, seek the amelioration of the human race by a bloodless victory over ignorance, and error, and crime.

The young men who are mounting the steps that lead upward to the stage of life, are ambitious of hasty fortunes or honors. Hence they embark in those speculations which promise the quickest returns for investments and profit;—or, more commonly, for profit without investment. Their souls are absorbed in watching the fluctuations of trade, the rise and fall of prices in the market-place. From these, the educationist has little to expect either of aid or sympathy. They may smile at his simplicity, they may deign to commend his good-natured enthusiasm, but they pass by to their counter and their merchandise. Speak to them of acquiring a stock of knowledge adequate to make life useful and happy, and they will ask, how much semi-annual interest it will pay; speak to them of laying up treasures in heaven, and they will inquire at what rates they are taken at the United States' mint.

As little has the educationist to hope from the political aspirant, sighing for the "most sweet voices" of the people. He has bought

a ticket in the lottery of Fame, and looks for a speedy distribution of the prizes. He cannot appreciate the value of any thing so remote as the fate of the rising generation. He regards the next election as his day of final account, and is too much busied in preparation for it to attend to other concerns. When the destiny of that day is determined, he enters into the elysium of success, or is more engrossed than ever in escaping from the purgatory of defeat. In either case, he has no leisure nor aid for the improvement of that mental and moral condition of the people which mends or mars all. There is another species of the same genus, indeed, who have a wonderful facility in accommodating themselves to circumstances. They send in their adhesion to the successful competitor, on whichever side he may be found; for if, say they, in a republican government, the majority is always right, why should not we always be found upon the right side? On neither of these classes,—and who has taken their census?—can the friends of education rely.

The doubtful issue of an enterprise,—especially when the doubt sometimes seems merging in hopelessness,—is too formidable a discouragement to be overlooked. Despair cannot work. There must be a chance of accomplishing the end designed, or Perseverance herself dies. Since this Journal was commenced,—now three years ago,—many others, having the same general object in view, have been born and buried. Amid the innumerable excitements which overspread the land,—transient and trivial as most of them were,—they found no ear unappropriated, no fibre of the public heart which some projector had not already put into vibration, and tuned to his own purposes. Though the disciples of this cause, therefore, have lifted up their voices in the city, yet they have been like the voice of one crying in the wilderness, for there have been none to hear them.

In view of these discouragements and obstacles, we feel that we should not merit the appellation of the “slothful man,” though we should exclaim, “There is a lion in the way.” Perhaps, however, if a lion does confront us, there are weapons and a spirit wherewith to meet and vanquish him.

Set over against difficulties to be encountered, are the motives to encounter them. The resisting forces may be great, but the impelling forces may be greater. And if ever there was a cause, if ever there can be a cause, worthy to be upheld, by all of toil or sacrifice that the human hand or heart can endure, it is the cause of education. It has intrinsic and indestructible merits. It holds the welfare of mankind in its embrace, as the protecting arms of a mother fold her infant to her bosom. The very ignorance and selfishness which obstruct its path are the strongest arguments for its promotion, for it furnishes the only adequate means for their removal. It is worthy, therefore, to be urged forward over the dead obstacles of listlessness and apathy, and against the living hostility of those sordid men who oppose its advancement for no higher reason than that of the silversmiths who trafficked in the shrines of the goddess Diana, and who would have quenched the holy light of Christianity for all mankind, rather than forego their profits upon idol-worship.

Animated by these feelings, we again enroll ourselves as a soldier in this cause,—not in the presumptuous expectation that we can achieve

aught that is worthy of its name; but, at the same time, not without hope that, while we uphold its banner, others may rally around it, and bear it on to victory.

Education derives arguments for its support from a more comprehensive range of considerations than ever united their advocacy for any other human interest. Health, freedom, wisdom, virtue, time, eternity, plead in its behalf. Some causes have reference to temporal interests; some to eternal;—education embraces both.

The view which invests education with the awful prerogative of projecting its consequences forward through the whole length of the illimitable future, will not be objected to by the champions of any religious creed. Those who believe that the destiny of the human soul is irrevocably fixed for weal or woe by its state or condition when its exit from life is made,—who believe that, as it is then sanctified, or unregenerate, it must go out from this world, through an opposite avenue, and into an opposite eternity,—will equally believe and maintain the *tendency* of intellectual and moral guidance, or neglect, especially during the impressible period of youth, to turn its course into the broad, or into the narrow way. Those, also, who believe that, although the soul should enter the spiritual world “unhouselled, unanointed, unannealed,” yet that it will not be cut off from hope, but will be allowed to pass through other cycles of probation,

“Till the foul crimes done in its days of nature
Are burnt and purged away,”

will of course believe and maintain that, the lighter the burden of sin which weighs it down, at its entrance into another life, the sooner will its recuperative energies enable it to rise from its guilty fall, and to ascend to the empyrean of perfect happiness. There is still another class, who interpret the Scriptures to promise universal beatitude to the whole human race, at the instant of death. They maintain that the soul leaves every earthly impurity in the foul tabernacle of flesh, where each had polluted the other during life, and at once springs aloft to be robed in garments of purity. But even they do not suppose that the spirit, though ransomed and cleansed by omnipotent grace, can overleap the immense moral spaces it has lost, and at once engage in the services of the upper temple, with that seraphic ardor which burns in bosoms, where its flame had been kindled while yet on earth. In other words, if the dogma of the theologians were true, that there are in heaven seven orders of celestial spirits, they will allow, that a wretch who died perpetrating sacrilege with his hands, and blaspheming God with his tongue, cannot, at once, and without a single rehearsal, strike the harp and sing hosannas in unison with the highest perfected spirits, but must forever be somewhat procrastinated in his ascent from order to order, in the celestial hierarchy.

In regard to Intellectual Education, no man can offer a single reason for arresting its progress, and confining it where it now is, which would not be equally available for reducing its present amount. He who would degrade the intellectual standing of Massachusetts to the level of Ireland, would degrade Ireland to the level of interior Africa, or of the Batta Islands. Nor could even the rank of savage life claim any immunity from still lower debasement. In the “lowest deep,” there would be some whose selfishness would demand the opening of a still

“lower deep.” There would be no halting post until the race had reached the limits of degradation in troglodytes and monkeys, and the godlike faculty of reason had been lost in the mechanism of animal instinct. The useful and elegant arts that minister to the comfort of man, and gladden his eye with beauty; poetry and eloquence that ravish the soul; philosophy that comprehends the workmanship of the heavens, and reads, in the present condition of the earth, as in the leaves of a book, the records of myriads of ages gone by; language by which we are taught by all the generations that are past, and by which we may teach all the generations that are to come;—all these would be sunk in oblivion, and all the knowledge possessed by the descendants of Bacon, and Newton, and Franklin, would be to chatter and mow, to burrow in a hole, and crack nuts with the teeth. Such is the catastrophe to which we should come, could those prevail, who would make the present horizon of human knowledge stationary.

Physical Education is not only of great importance on its own account, but, in a certain sense, it seems to be invested with the additional importance of both intellectual and moral; because, although we have frequent proofs, that there may be a human body without a soul, yet, under our present earthly conditions of existence, there cannot be a human soul without a body. The statue must lie prostrate, without a pedestal; and, in this sense, the pedestal is as important as the statue.

The present generation is suffering incalculably under an ignorance of physical education. It is striving to increase the number of pleasurable sensations, without any knowledge of the great laws of health and life, and thus defeats its own object. The sexes, respectively, are deteriorating from their fathers, and especially from their mothers, in constitutional stamina. The fifteen millions of the United States, at the present day, are by no means five times the three millions of the revolutionary era. Were this degeneracy attributable to mother Nature, we should compare her to a fraudulent manufacturer, who, having established his name in the market for the excellence of his fabrics, should avail himself of his reputation to palm off subsequent bales or packages, with the same stamp or ear-mark, but of meaner quality. Thus it is with the present race, as compared with their ancestors,—short in length, deficient in size and weight, and sleazy in texture. The activity and boldness of the sanguine temperament, and the enduring nature of the fibrous, which belonged to the olden time, are succeeded by the weak refinements of the nervous, and the lolling, lackadaisical, fashionable sentimentality of the lymphatic. The old hearts of oak are gone. Society is suffering under a curvature of the spine. If deterioration holds on, at its present rate, especially in our cities, we shall soon be a bed-ridden people. There will be a land of ghosts and shadows this side of Acheron and the Elysian fields. Where are the young men, and, emphatically, where are the young women, who promise a green and vigorous age at seventy? The sweat and toil of the field and of the household are despised, and no substitute is provided for these invigorating exercises. Even professed connoisseurs, who lounge and dawdle in the galleries of art, and labor to express their weak rapture at the Jove-like stature and sublime strength of Hercules, or at the majestic figure of Venus, beneath whose

ample zone there resides the energy which prevents grace from degenerating into weakness,—even they will belie, in dress and contour, all the power and beauty they profess to admire. There is a general effeminacy in our modes of life, as compared with the indurating exposures of our ancestors. Our double-windows ; our air-tight houses ; our heated and unventilated apartments, from nursery to sleeping-room, and church ; the multitude of our garments of fur, and down, and woollen, numerous as the integuments around an Egyptian mummy,—beneath which we shrink, and cower, and hide ourselves from our best friend, the north-west wind ; our carriages, in which we ride when we should be on foot ;—all these enervating usages, *without any equivalent of exercise or exposure*, are slackening the whole machinery of life. More weakly children are born, than under the vigorous customs and hardy life of our fathers ; and, what is still more significant, a far greater proportion of these puny children, under our tender and delicate nursing, are reared than was formerly done. A weak cohesion still exists in many a thread of life, which, under the rough handling of former times, would have been snapped. Amid hardship and exposure, the young were toughened or destroyed. Nature passed round among them, as a gardener among his plants, and weeded out the blasted and mildewed. She shook the tree, till the sickly fruits fell off. She did not preserve these, as the stock from which to produce the still more degraded fruits of a second season. But, under the modern hothouse system, the puny and feeble are saved. They grow up without strength, passing from the weakness of childhood to that of age, without taking the vigor of manhood in their course. By the various appliances of art, indeed, the stooping frame can be kept upright, and the shrunk be rounded out, into the semblance of humanity. But these cheats give no internal, organic force. Though the arts of bolstering up the human figure, and of giving to its unsightly angles the curvilinear forms of grace, should grow into a science, and its practice should be the most lucrative of professions, yet not one element of genuine beauty or dignity will be thereby gained. Such arts can never bestow elasticity and vigor upon the frame, nor suffuse “the human face divine” with the roseate hues of health. The complexion will still be wan, the pulse feeble, the motions languid. The eye will have no fire. The imagination will lose its power to turn all light into rainbows. The intellect will never be sufficiently expanded to receive *a system of truths*, and single truths cut out from their connections, and adopted without reference to kindred truths, always mislead. The affections will fall, like Lucifer, from the upper, to fasten upon objects, in the nether sphere. In a word, the forces of the soul will retreat from the fore-head to the hind-head, and the brow, that “dome of thought, and palace of the soul,” will be narrow and “villanously low ;” for it is here that Nature sets her signet, and stamps her child a philosopher or a cretin. Here she will not suffer her signatures to be counterfeited, for neither tailors nor mantua-makers can insert their cork or padding beneath the tables of the skull.

We have now pointed, as with the finger and rapidly, towards those grand relations in which mankind stand to the cause of education. These relations lie all around us. They connect us with the universe of matter, and with the universe of mind ; and hence the necessity of

our possessing knowledge, for it is only by knowledge that we can adjust ourselves to the objects to which we are related. These truths also point to the future; and hence the necessity that we should regulate our conduct according to them, for every act of life is a step carrying us further towards, or further from, the goal of our being.

To promote this object, at once so comprehensive and so enduring, is among the first duties of governments; it is also among the first duties of individuals. It is the duty of the great and powerful, in their broad sphere of action; and it is no less the duty of the humble and obscure, in their narrower circle. Let every one contribute "according to his ability."

The labor of another year, in endeavoring to advance the well-being of our fellow-men, through enlightenment, and the impulse of higher motives, is the mite which we propose to cast into the "treasury" of the Lord. We ask others to cast in of their abundance. We ask all to receive into their minds the great idea of social improvement, to contemplate, and strive to embody in human form, the sublime law of progression,—the possibility and the practicability of an ever-upward ascension in the scale of being. The race can be made happier and better than it is. There are innumerable sufferings which spring from ignorance. This, knowledge will dispel, and relieve multitudes who are now tormented with unnecessary and gratuitous pain. There are innumerable sufferings springing from fountains of perverted feeling, which have no necessary existence, which are no part of the inevitable lot of humanity. These, like the debasing customs of savage life, like the foul superstitions and idolatries of paganism, can be cast off, as a garment which we have outgrown. There are ten thousand existing causes of misery and crime, which need not be reproduced and perpetuated in the coming generation. Many, nay, most, of the burdens which mankind have borne, which we now bear, may be lightened, before they are cast upon our successors. Save, O, save the myriads of innocent beings who are just landing upon the shores of time;—save them from the contaminations of the world into which they are sent; teach not their unpolluted lips to utter curses, nor their hands to uphold injustice, nor their feet to wander in forbidden paths. Even those who take the darkest views of human nature, and who proclaim the most fearful auguries concerning its ultimate destiny,—even they will admit that the young are less vicious than the old; that childhood has a simplicity and an ingenuousness which intercourse with the world corrupts and debauches. They will admit that there is a guilelessness, an uncalculating affection, a sensibility to wrong, in the breasts of the young, which the arts and customs of the world deprave and harden. It is we, who, by our ignorance and our apathy, by our parsimony and our pride, create in them diseases which even the brute creation do not suffer, because they do not abuse the natures which God has given them. Why should we, who, in our considerate moments, would not punish even the wretch suspected of crime, until guilt is fastened upon him by indubitable proof, and who, even then, profess to pity him, as he meets the just retributions of a violated law,—why should we lead children astray by our evil customs and practices, and bring down upon them those penalties, which, in the self-executing law of God, will assuredly follow transgression? To punish the innocent has been re-

garded with abhorrence and execration in all ages of the world; but to tempt innocence to the commission of those offences which incur punishment, is far more cruel, because guilt is infinitely worse than the punishment which avenges it. Why should innocent childhood be tormented with pains not of its own procuring,—with pains which the follies and the vices of ancestors seem to have prepared, and made ready against its coming? Why should the new-born generations be ushered into a world worse than themselves; to breathe in physical and moral contaminations which they did not scatter; to die of maladies engendered by those who should have been their protectors and guardian spirits?

It is in our power to rescue children from these calamities. It is in our power to guard them from the contagion of guilt, from that subtlest of poisons, an evil example. They can be restrained from entering paths where others have fallen and perished. No rude child of ignorance, left to himself in the wild wilderness where he was born, ever reached to a thousandth part of that depravity, which has been achieved as a common thing, by those whose birthplace was in a land of boasted civilization. Civilization, then, has not accomplished its object. It has given more power than rectitude,—the ability to perform great things without that moral sovereignty, before which the greatest and grandest achievements stand condemned, if not consecrated by goodness.

And here we would inquire what sphere of patriotic exertion is left open for the lover of his country, but the sphere of improving the rising generation through the instrumentality of a more perfect and efficient system for their education? We call our fathers *patriots*, because they loved their country and made sacrifices for its welfare. But what was their country? A vast tract of wilderness territory did not constitute it. It was not unconscious, insentient plains, or rivers, or mountains, however beautifully and majestically they might spread, or flow, or shine, beneath the canopy of heaven. Their country was chiefly their descendants, the human beings who were to throng these vast domains, the sentient, conscious natures which were to live here,—and living, to enjoy or suffer. The question with them was, whether this should be a land of liberty or bondage, of light or darkness, of religion or superstition. It was to redeem and elevate the millions who, in the providence of God, should people these wide-spreading realms, that they engaged in a cause where those who suffered death seemed to suffer least, where the survivors most challenge our sympathy. But we have no battles to fight by land or sea, against a foreign foe. We have no fathers, or brothers, or sons, in the camp, suffering cold, and hunger, and nakedness. We have no edifice of government to rear, with exhausting study and anxiety. These labors are done and ended, and we have entered into the rich inheritance. What, then, shall we do that we may be patriotic? How shall our love of country, if any we have, be made manifest? How, but by laboring for our descendants,—not in the same way, but with the same fidelity, as our fathers labored for us? Otherwise, there is no moral consanguinity between ourselves and them. Otherwise, we are not of their blood, but gentiles and heathens, boasting a lineage which our acts and lives belie. It is mockery to say, “We have Abraham

to our father," while we perform the deeds of pagans. The only sphere, then, left open for our patriotism, is the improvement of our children,—not the few, but the many; not a part of them, but all. This is but one field of exertion, but it opens an infinite career; for the capacities of mankind can go on developing, improving, perfecting, as long as the cycles of eternity revolve. For this improvement of the race, a high, a generous, an expansive education is the true and efficient means. There is not a good work which the hand of man has ever undertaken, which his heart has ever conceived, which does not require a good education for its helper. There is not an evil afflicting the earth, which can be extirpated, until the auxiliary of education shall lend its mighty aid. If an angel were to descend from heaven, to earth, on an errand of mercy and love, he would hasten to accomplish his mission by illuminating the minds and purifying the hearts of children. The Savior took little children in his arms and blessed them; he did not, by any miraculous exertion of power, bar up all passages to sin and error, and at once make mankind the passive recipients of perfection. He left it for us to be agents and co-workers with him in their redemption. He gave to us, not so much the boon of being blessed, as the more precious, the heavenly boon of blessing others. For this end, an instrument has been put into our hands, fully adequate to the accomplishment of so divine a purpose. We have the power to train up children in accordance with those wise and benign laws which the Creator has stamped upon their physical, their intellectual, and their moral nature; and of this stewardship, we must assuredly give account. May it be rendered with joy, and not with sorrow!

"THE YOUNG,—and how many soul-stirring associations cluster around that term! *The young*,—to whom the language of the cradle, and the lessons of the tomb, are equally accessible! *The young*,—the rising hope of the earth, for whose benefit man has been toiling on, ever since the creation, and now presents the accumulated experience of nearly six thousand years, to admonish, to warn, and to guide! *The young*,—whom posterity are to hold responsible for the proper execution of high and holy trusts;—trusts increasing in magnitude and importance, as the experience of the world accumulates its lessons. *The young*,—who are just now stepping upon life's thronged arena, on whom the chains of habit have never yet been riveted, and whose course and destiny depend essentially, yea, entirely, upon themselves! O that we might redeem, that we might save, that we might enlighten, that we might ennoble, THE YOUNG!"

A LECTURE ON THE BEST MODE OF PREPARING AND USING SPELLING-BOOKS.

Delivered before the American Institute of Instruction, August, 1841.

BY HORACE MANN, SECRETARY OF THE MASSACHUSETTS BOARD OF EDUCATION.

My subject is Spelling-Books, and the manner in which they should be prepared and used for teaching the Alphabet, Orthography, and Pronunciation of the English language. I ought rather to say, of the English languages, for we have two English languages; one according

to which we write, another according to which we speak. Any one will be impressed with this fact, on opening an English dictionary, and seeing placed side by side, two columns for the same words,—one column orthographical, the other orthoepical.

It is amusing to look back to the etymology of the words *orthography* and *orthoepy*, (which in treating this subject we have such frequent occasion to use,) and to find that one of the Greek words from which each of them is derived, *ὀρθός*, means *straight* or *direct*. If *y, a, c, h, t*, is a straight or direct way of spelling *yot*; or, *p, h, t, h, i, s, i, c*, of spelling *tiz-ic*, I hope we may be delivered from learning what *crooked* is.

In treating of the best manner of acquiring the orthography of our tongue, we ought first to ascertain the nature of its difficulties. We shall then be better prepared to decide what is remediable, and to devise the remedy.

For the construction of our language it is commonly said that we have twenty-six characters or elements,—viz., the vowels, *a, e, i, o, u*, and *w*, and *y*, when they do not begin a word or syllable,—the rest consonants. The truth, however, is, that we have about fifty characters or elements,—viz., the twenty-six capitals, and the twenty-six common letters, almost all of which differ from the capitals in their form,—to say nothing of the Italic variety, of double letters, diphthongs, &c.

The five vowels *a, e, i, o, u*, ought to be called five harlequins. According to Worcester, these five letters alone have twenty-nine different sounds,—viz., *a*, seven; *e*, five; *i*, five; *o*, six; and *u*, six. But the difficulty of their number is nothing, compared with that of their masquerading. In almost every line we read, these letters reappear several times; but however short their exit from the stage, they reënter in a changed dress. Proteus is held a proverb of changeableness, but compared with these he was no turncoat, but a staid, uniform personage. To conceive of a child's difficulty, in giving the right sounds to the alphabetic characters, as found in words, let us suppose any five articles of furniture or dress, which we have most frequent occasion to use or to wear, were liable to change into twenty-nine articles of furniture or dress, the moment we should touch them; and, further, that this metamorphosis were not only arbitrary, but apparently wanton.

But not only does the same letter puzzle us with its multiplicity of sounds, but different letters have the same sound; and combinations of letters assume the sound of individual letters; and they mock us by playing back and forth with the facility and the malignancy of evil sprites. Thus, as Mr. Pierpont has shown in his "Little Learner," there are eight letters and combinations of letters which have the first sound of *a*, as in *fate*,—viz., *a*, in *date*; *ai*, in *paid*; *aigh*, in *straight*; *ay*, in *day*; *ch*, in *eh*, (exclamation); *eigh*, in *eight*; and *ey* in *they*. So the first sound of *e* is given to *e*, in *be*; to *ea*, in *bean*; *ee* in *bee*; *ei*, in *seize*; *eo*, in *people*; *i*, in *machine*; *ie*, in *grief*; and *o*, in *you*. The first sound of *o* is given to *o*, in *note*; *oa*, in *boat*; *oe*, in *doe*; *oh*, in *oh*, (exclamation); *ough*, in *borough*; *ow* in *throw*; *owe*, in *owe*; and *au*, in *beau*. Again; *ough* appears in these different sounds,—*bough*, *cough*, *hough*, (the hinder part of the leg of a beast,) *though*, *thought*, *through*, *thorough*, *tough*;—and surely this is tough enough. It was on this combination, or rather dispersion, that the celebrated couplet was formed,—

"Though the tough cough and hiccough plough me through,
O'er life's dark lough,* I still my way pursue."

Take, as specimens, such words as *success*, or *vaccine*, where, although the letters *c c* are placed in juxtaposition, they are sounded differently; or the words *holy* and *wholesome*; or the classes of words in which *ei* and *ie* are arbitrarily transposed, as *perceive*, *retrieve*, *deceive*, *believe*, *receive*, *aggrieve*, &c.,—in one class the *i* coming before the *e*, in the other after it, though sounded alike in both cases. Why should there be a *t* in *clutch* and *crutch*, but none in *such* or *much*? It is no small achievement in our language, for the tongue to spell its own name. Take any volume of poetry, and observe with what different combinations of letters the lines terminate, and you will perceive, however certain it is that each rhyme will chime, yet the harmony is only for the ear, not for the eye. If a school boy is taught to spell *scold*, and *scorn*, and *score*, without an *h*, and then gets *scolded*, and *scorned*, and perhaps *scored*, because he spells *scholar* without one, it surely will not tend to increase his thanksgivings, whatever effect it may have upon his aspirations. Though a child is approved for saying *hat*, yet if, on prefixing the letter *w*, he says *whät*, he will be called a *flat*; and however impossible it may be to see the logical deduction, yet, after having uniformly said *wherefore*, he must say *therefore*.

But an exposition of all the contradictions, complexities, and tortuosities in the formation of our language, can never be given by any finite mind. It is one immense shuffle and prevarication. However Hibernian it may seem, it is still almost true, that what rules there are, are exceptions, and that the anomalies tend towards a law, not from one. If the twenty-six letters were multiplied into each other, according to the rule of permutations and combinations, the product would hardly exceed the bewildering diversities of its construction;—for after all the differences in the powers of the letters, whether used singly, or in combination, there would still remain unenumerated, all the cases of silent letters, the reduplication or omission of consonants in compound and derivative words, and the transposition of sounds,—as in the numerous cases where *h*, though coming after *w*, in writing, is sounded before it, as in the words *when*, *whether*, *wherefore*, &c. In the last-named cases, the *h* was formerly written before the *w*, following the sound, as *hwen*, instead of *when*;—but this natural arrangement was altered for no other reason that we can perceive, but only to render it a member, worthy to be admitted *ad eundem*, into the general chaos. In the same way the words *knot* and *gnarled* seem to have been spelled with a *k*, and a *g*, to make the orthography of the names twist and curl like the things themselves.

The dissonance of this Babel has been sadly aggravated, because spelling-book and dictionary makers have adopted different modes for the notation of sounds. Some have used the Arabic figures to designate sounds as long, short, broad, acute, grave, &c.; while others employ such characters as the horizontal mark, the circumflex, diæresis, cedilla, &c., so that, in order to learn the signs by which the same letters are to be translated into different sounds, we must begin by learning the different languages of the translators. This seems a gratuitous

* Irish, for *lake*.

and wanton imposition of labor. Surely there might be an understanding among the leading orthoepists and lexicographers, so that the same signs might be uniformly used to indicate the same sounds; and so that, after a child has learned twenty-six capital, and twenty-six common, Roman letters, and twenty-six capital, and twenty-six common, Italic letters, together with double letters, diphthongs and triphthongs, he need not be obliged to learn a multitude of signs whereby the sound of each one of this multitude of letters is indicated. It is of less importance what is agreed upon than that there should be an agreement. It may be remarked, however, that, as the Arabic figures have their specific uses and significations, in regard to number and quantity, there seems to be no reason for using them as the signs of different sounds, except it be that the learner may find a different meaning attached to them all, when he comes to arithmetic, and thus encounter the same gratuitous difficulty which embarrassed his acquisition of reading! If a pupil is taught that the figure 1 denotes the sound of *a*, as in *fame*; 2, the sound of *a*, as in *far*; 3, the sound of *a*, as in *fall*; and 4, the sound of *a*, as in *fat*; and, at the same time, should be studying Numeration, he might very naturally infer that these letters had 1234 different sounds. What, then, shall we say of the mischievousness of using both modes indiscriminately, by the same compiler, as has been done in some modern spelling-books?

But such is the English language,—or rather such are the English languages, at the present day; and it seems to be generally considered impracticable, either to make the written language conform to the spoken, or the spoken to the written. Yet the orthographical English language must be written, and therefore it must be spelled; and the inevitable consequence of this is, that the children must learn the art,—or rather the black-art of spelling.

I need not occupy any time, to prove that the ability to spell with uniform correctness, is a rare possession amongst our people. It has not unfrequently been suggested that intelligence in the people is so necessary for the preservation of a republican government, that no person should be allowed to vote who could not both read and write. If, however, the suggestion means that no person should be allowed to vote, but such as could write without failures in spelling, I tremble at the almost universal disfranchisement. Our republic would be changed to an oligarchy at once. I have been told, by a gentleman of high standing in the legal profession, that he was once concerned in a cause where it became his duty to examine the depositions of thirty students of a celebrated Theological Institution, which depositions had been written by the deponents themselves,—all of whom had graduated at some college before they became members of the institution,—and that only one of the thirty was spelled with uniform correctness. In the way of professional, official, and editorial life, for the last sixteen years, it has been my fortune to inspect and read an almost countless number of depositions, records, petitions, remonstrances, legislative documents, reports, letters, and communications, of all kinds, and on all subjects;—and in all charity, I must say, that, allowing the proportion of thoroughly correct spellers, on subjects within the limits of their own office or occupation, to be one half per cent., the result must still be taken with a very liberal discount. There is no such leveller as Eng-

lish orthography. It mingles patrician and plebeian in one common lot; and here the lot of imperfection is emphatically the lot of *English* humanity. I have, indeed, been sometimes led to query whether the errors I have found were not, in part, waggery, rather than all ignorance. When, for instance, I once found a long school report, drawn up by a gentleman of some note, which advocated an increase of the salary,—or wages, as we usually call it,—of teachers, in which, from beginning to end, the word *wages* was spelled *w, e, d, g, e, s*, I could not but query whether the author did not covertly mean some golden instrument wherewith to open teachers' hearts.

This almost universal illiteracy, in regard to spelling, seems to me to have two sources;—one, the inherent difficulty of the language itself,—the other, the manner in which, and the instruments by which, orthography is commonly taught. It is, indeed, contended by some, that the whole, or substantially the whole, of our bad spelling, results from the untowardness and absurdity of the methods used in teaching. These objectors against present modes affirm that bad spelling is not a necessity, nor a thing of spontaneous growth, but a product wrought out laboriously, and at a great expense of money and tribulation of spirit. They aver that, if spelling were taught only by reading, and from the reading lessons, it would be easily learned; and in confirmation of this, they allege that those who study French, and never use any French spelling-book, but learn to spell while they learn to translate, either orally or in writing,—that such pupils acquire the enigmatical orthography of the French language with facility and correctness, although at an age when the formation of words from letters is much less easily mastered than in childhood.

But without admitting fully the correctness of this opinion, one thing seems certain, that we are to look for a remedy or preventive of bad spelling, not in an alteration in the language itself, but in a change of the modes and means of teaching it. We cannot expect that the inherent difficulties of the language will be removed, but we may expect that the manner of teaching it will be reformed.

It is a familiar principle of the English common law, that every weapon or instrument, by means of which human life has been taken, shall be forfeited to the crown, under the name of a *deodand*; and I could not refuse so far to agree with the objectors against the present modes of teaching orthography as to admit, that if this legal principle were applied to most of our spelling-books, they would be adjudged to be forfeited to the sovereign, for having been the instrument or means by which all life and spirit have been destroyed in so many of our school children.

A spelling-book may be prepared on one or more of these three principles.

1st. It may be prepared strictly in reference to the language, whose orthography is to be taught, that is, it may be extensive in regard to the number of the words contained; it may be faithful in following the highest authorities in all doubtful cases; it may be correct in syllabication, accents, half-accent, and so forth.

2d. It may be prepared mainly in reference to the teacher who is to use it, giving rules for the formation of derivative words, for prefixes and suffixes, for the omission, retention, reduplication, or euphonic

change of consonants, for the omission of vowels, for adding particles or expletive syllables, &c., and it may carefully explain what are called the niceties of the language.

Or, 3d. The spelling-book may be prepared mainly with reference to the ease, pleasure, and progress of the little learner, fitted to arouse his curiosity, and adapted to those faculties of his mind which are then most active.

Now, who will contend that a spelling-book for young children should be prepared for the first purpose, that is, for the sake of the language,—for exemplifying its copiousness, for settling the principles of its derivation, or tracing out its recondite analogies?

And again; who will contend that a spelling-book, to be used by young children, should be prepared with especial reference to the convenience, instruction, or guidance of the teacher? The teacher ought to know every thing that pertains to doubtful orthography, to accent, syllabication, the rules for the reduplication or omission of letters, &c., before he becomes a teacher; because he ought not to undertake to perform the services of a workman, when he secretly intends to learn his trade as an apprentice.

But thirdly; who will deny that the spelling-book, while it does not lose sight of the two preceding objects, should be mainly and scrupulously prepared with reference to the pupil,—to his ease, pleasure, and progress in acquiring so difficult a language?

1st. The spelling-book should have especial reference to the *ease* of the pupil,—to his facility in learning to spell and read. The pupil should not be first mistaught, and then untaught, in order to be re-taught, with the chance that the last two processes will never be performed. The native love of consistency or congruity in a child should not be obliterated or outraged by a perpetual succession of contradictions. He should be taught correctly at first, and then whatever new things are taught should be affiliated, as far as possible, to what is already known. We all know how much more easily new languages are acquired, if we already know the stock, or parent language from which they spring. A new science is more readily mastered after having mastered the kindred sciences. Now, let us examine the course ordinarily pursued in teaching children to read, and see if it does not violate all ideas of ease and consistency. A child is required to learn the names of twenty-six letters, to repeat them day after day and month after month, giving to each letter a single and uniform sound. He is then required to follow up this repetition in tables of *ab, eb, ib, ob, ub*, &c.; then in tables of *ba, be, bi, bo, bu*, &c.; then *bla*, with its conjuncts; then *bra, ska, sha, qua*; then *bram, flam*, &c. &c., until the infinite of nonsense is exhausted. After having repeated these letters and particles, thousands of times, where the same sound is uniformly given to the same letter or combination of letters, he is then taken into words, where each of the principal letters, in the rapidity of its changes from one sound to another, outdoes ventriloquism;—where the first five vowels to which respectively he has been accustomed to give the same alphabetic sound, assume twenty-nine different sounds, so that, according to the doctrine of chances, it will happen only once in five or six times that he will be correct, if he sounds them as he was taught;—where the twenty-six letters, and the same combi-

nations of two or three of them, assume hundreds of different sounds, without any clew by which to follow them as they glide from one into another;—where letters are often dropped out of notice altogether;—where *g* sometimes becomes *j*, and *x* becomes *gz*;—where *th* changes every breath we breathe;—where *tion* and *sion* are *shun*; *cial*, *sial*, and *tial*, are *shal*, (not *shall*, which is different still;) *ccous*, *cious*, and *tious*, are *shus*; *geous* and *gious* are *jus*, (not the Latin *jus* either;) *sion* is *zhun*; *qu* is *kw*; *wh* is *hw*; *ph* is *f*; and *c* is uniformly concealed in *s*, or sacrificed as a victim to *k* or *z*.

To this must be added the catalogue of proper names,—an aggravated list,—whether geographical or personal, ancient or modern,—from *Melchisedek* and *Nebuchadnezzar* in Hebrew history, down to

“Some Russian, whose dissonant, consonant name
Almost rattles to fragments the trumpet of Fame.”

In this way the child's previous knowledge of the alphabetic sounds of the letters misleads; four times in five, if he recollects them right, he will call them wrong, and be rebuffed; the more thoroughly he has learned, and the more correct are his applications of the previous knowledge, the more infallibly he goes wrong. When a child is taught the three alphabetic sounds *l*, *e*, *g*, and then is told that these three sounds, when combined, make the sound *leg*, he is untaught in the latter case what he was mistaught in the former. *L*, *e*, *g*, does not spell *leg*, but if pronounced quickly, it spells *elegy*. If it is a fact, as I believe observation will prove it to be, that false orthography is generally resolvable into an effort to use those letters whose alphabetic sound would come nearest to the sound of the word, then surely it is a very instructive fact. It shows that there has not been enough of subsequent labor to enable the bad speller to unlearn what he was erroneously taught. The false spelling of new words, by putting together old words whose orthography is known, has an origin precisely similar. In the latter case, we use words with whose sounds and spelling we are familiar, in order to make the new word, as in the former we use letters with whose alphabetic sound we are familiar, in order to spell the original word. This was illustrated in a letter written to a friend of mine, which I saw a few days since. In the letter there were the words “Indian ears.” As my friend was an officer in a railroad corporation, he naturally inferred from that circumstance and from the context, that the writer meant “engineers.”*

* In the Second Annual Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education, the following remarks on this subject may be found: “The general practice, [of teaching the alphabet first,] is founded upon the notion that the learning of letters facilitates the correct combination of them into words. Hence children are drilled in the alphabet until they pronounce the name of each letter at sight. And yet, when we combine letters into words, we forthwith discard the sounds which belonged to them as letters. The child is taught to sound the letter *a*, until he becomes so familiar with it that the sound is uttered as soon as the character is seen. But the first time this letter is found, even in the most familiar words,—as in *father*, *papa*, *mamma*, *apple*, *peach*, *walnut*, *hat*, *cup*, *bat*, *rat*, *slap*, *pan*, &c. &c., it no longer has the sound he was before taught to give it, but one entirely different. And so of the other vowels. In words, they all seem in masquerade. Where is the alphabetic sound of *o* in the words *word*, *dore*, *plough*, *enough*, *other*, and in innumerable others? Any person may verify this by taking any succession of words, at random, in any English book. The consequence is, that, when the child meets his old friends in new company, like rogues, they have all changed their names. Thus the knowledge of the sounds of letters in the alphabet becomes an obstacle to the right pronunciation of words; and the more perfect the knowledge, the greater the obstacle. The reward of the

Give a child such a sentence as this: "The far-famed walls of the palace are fast falling to decay." He begins by giving the alphabetic sound of *a* to the *a* in *far*, and, of course, calls it *fāre*; he is corrected, and told to pronounce it *far*; he catches the sound of *a* in *far*, and proceeds to the next word, which he calls *famm'd*; here he is again corrected, and made to say *famed*; he then pronounces *walls*, *wales*, according to the last direction; but this will not do, and he is obliged to say *walls*; in consequence of this, he gives the broad sound to the first syllable in *palace*, calling it *páll*; here he is snubbed, and told to say *pal*; he does so, and, hurrying to the next syllable, he sounds the second *a* like the first; the teacher now begins to think him a fool, and is confirmed in the opinion, when he carries forward the obscure sound of *a*, as in *palace*, and applies it, instead of the grave sound, to *a*, in *are*; the poor child, now seeing the same letter in the next word, *fast*, is in a quandary, and will not venture to pronounce it, but waits to be told; being told how to pronounce *fast*, he abides by the direction, and says *fal-ing*, when he is violently arrested, and made to utter *fálling*, *fálling*, *fálling*, with repetition and emphasis; secure in this sound, he comes to the last word, which, in imitation of the preceding, he calls *decá*, and gets slapped, if not flayed, for his stupidity. Is this ease? Is this straightforward and direct? Is this teaching in such a manner as to supersede the necessity to unteach? Who has not seen a hapless child, when first carried from the alphabet into short words, after he finds that none of the letters with which he thought he was so well acquainted, will now answer to their names; but that all balk and tantalize him, and chatter in his face with unknown sounds,—who has not seen him gaze up in bewilderment into the teacher's face, with such a piteous and imploring look as would almost make statuary weep?

To relieve children from this wanton harassing, this gratuitous vexation, one of the two following modes should be adopted. Either the distinctive marks which denote sounds, as long, short, broad, grave, obscure, &c., should be affixed to each of the vowels, as they are learned, and the child taught to give the true sound to the letter so marked; and consonants also should be taught by giving them, not the common alphabetic sound, but the sounds which they are to have in combination,—which is called the *phonic* or *phonetic* method;—or, what I consider a far better and more philosophical mode,—whole words should be taught before teaching the letters of which they are composed. This mode, I proceed to explain.

[To be continued.]

child for having thoroughly mastered his letters is, to have his knowledge of them cut up in detail, by a regular series of contradictions, just as fast as he brings it forward. How different, for instance, is the sound of the word *is* from the two alphabetic sounds *i* and *s*;—of the word *ice* from the sounds *i* and *e*;—of the word *two* from the three sounds *t*, *w*, and *o*. We teach an honest child to sound the letters *e*, *y*, *e*, singly, until he utters them at sight, and then, with a grave face, we ask him what *e*, *y*, *e*, spells; and if he does not give the long sound of *i*, he is lucky if he escapes a rebuke or a frown. Nothing can more clearly prove the delightful confidence and trustfulness of a child's nature, than his not boldly charging us, under such circumstances, with imposition and fraud."